

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY	East Germany	REPORT	
SUBJECT	German Officers' and Soldiers' Meeting in East Berlin 25-26 June 1955	DATE DISTR.	23 September 1955
		NO. OF PAGES	5
DATE OF INFO.		REQUIREMENT NO.	RD
PLACE ACQUIRED		REFERENCES	25X1
DATE ACQUIRED			

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1. Reception and Lodgings

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Headquarters for the All-German Officers' and Soldiers' Meeting in East Berlin on 25-26 June 1955, were located in the Hotel Johannishof. All persons attending the meeting had to check in at the reception bureau at the Johannishof. The meeting, like that in January 1955, was in the hands of Gaudigks (fnu) and Major General Arthur Brandt. About 150 participants, including Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus and his closest associates, were lodged in the Hotel Johannishof. Paulus had a private salon and bedroom. Others were given rooms in the Hotel Adria. The remainder were housed in private quarters. Gaudigks was in charge of quartering all guests.

2. Control Measures

The reception bureau in the Hotel Johannishof was closely watched by the Sfb¹, and no announcement of names was permitted. The guests were carefully checked in other ways: each individual was presented by the headquarters office with a special admission card for the Kammerspiele Theater, admitting to the opening session, the closed performance of "Minna von Barnhelm", and the session of 26 June in which a proclamation was read and approved. No other outsider, except members of the orchestra and the actor Eduard von Winterstein, was permitted to attend the last session.

3. Attendance

Total attendance was reported in the newspapers as 500, of whom 350 came [redacted] estimated the total number of participants at 400 to 450 persons, because the Hotel Johannishof, where dinners were provided for all who attended, had to raise its estimate from 300 to 400 plates. One of the principal organizers of the meeting stated privately that 650 persons [redacted] had announced their intention of coming to the meeting, but that the [redacted]

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management had permitted only 350 of these to attend, when it was discovered that many veterans were attracted only by the opportunity for free meals and a free trip to Berlin. A number of firm acceptances were revoked by individuals at the last moment.

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About half the officers who had attended the January 1955 meeting were again present at the June conference. The great majority of the participants, however, were new. Approximately 50 percent were officers, the remainder were non-commissioned officers and a few enlisted men, most of whom had been awarded the Knight's Cross (Ritterkreuztraeger).

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Some of the East Germans were invited by Gaudigks, who handed them a written invitation signed by Dr. Hummeltenberg.

About twenty former officers came from Leipzig, according to a highly placed member of the National Democratic Party (NDF). Major General Sander (fnu), of the Waffen SS, was also noted among the guests.

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On the other hand, several important participants at the January conclave were conspicuous by their absence at the June conference.

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4. Free Travel and Board

This time the participants did not receive a per diem allowance, but did receive free travel and free board and room during their entire stay in Berlin. The food was outstandingly good, and was in glaring contrast to the conditions in East Berlin. Drinks were varied and plentiful. Only the best Western wines were served.

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5. Total Cost of the Meeting

Actually the cost of entertaining each participant must have amounted at least to 80 DEM, and to this the cost of drinks and smokes should be added.

The principal items of expense, in addition to the rooms at the Johannishof and the Adria, and the very sumptuous food, were the cost of the Leipzig Symphony Orchestra of the State Radio Committee, and the performance of "Minna von Barnhelm".

The cost of the entire conference must have amounted to a round 100,000 DEM.³

6. Conference Sessions

The principal sessions of the conference were held in the Kammerspiele Theater. This fact had not been announced in the original program, and was not known to the participants until the last minute. The meeting rooms in the Hotel Johannishof were too small to hold all the guests.

The schedule began on 25 June with reception and registration of the guests up to 10:30 a.m. in the Hotel Johannishof. This was followed by lunch from

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11:15 to 12:15 in both hotels, according to one's lodging. At 1:30 p.m. the regular conference began with the opening ceremonies and the welcoming of the participants. A certain Schneider (fnu), member of the NDP, presided. Since the Presiding Directorate and the Drafting Committee had already been appointed, there was no question of an election of a chairman or other officers by the conference itself.

Printed programs announced the "Meeting of the Former Officers and Soldiers in the German Capital City of Berlin" and presented the conference with a motto: "For a peaceful, united, independent Fatherland!"

The first speech, by Paulus, called for the reconstitution of the unity of Germany, the formation of an All-German government, free elections, withdrawal of all occupation troops, and creation of a neutral Germany (ein neutrales Deutschland) participating in a pact of collective security. An All-German government was to be created by bringing together the two existing governments and forming a provisional government for all Germany, which would make preparations for free All-German elections, and other duties.

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7. Directorate and Drafting Committee

The Presiding Directorate had been appointed before the meeting. The 19 members included:

- a. Friedrich Paulus, former Field Marshal, now of Dresden.
- b. Arthur Brandt, former Lieutenant General of the Air Force.
- c. Georg Ebrecht, former Lieutenant General of the Waffen-SS, of Linden.
- d. Joachim Mehring, former Second Lieutenant of the Waffen-SS, of Dresden.
- e. Hauning (fnu), former Major General, commander of the Dresden 194th Artillery Regiment.
- f. Gaudigke (fnu), of Dresden.
- g. Friedrich Kusse, former Major General, of Leipzig.
- h.
- i. Schneider (fnu), member of the East German NDP.
- j. Dr. Max Hummeltenberg.⁵
- k. Beetticher (fnu), former Captain, member of the NDP, Dresden.
- l.

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About half of the members of the directorate had been members of the Presidium of the Berlin officers' meeting in January.

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even the NDP newspaper, which was the only one to give large play to the conference, omitted the SS designation for these two officers.

The majority of newspapers limited themselves to the bare report of the meeting by the ADN news service. This notice simply repeated the six demands contained in the proclamation read and approved at the session of 26 June.

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8. Attitudes Expressed

Before and after the sessions in the Kammerspiele, many participants met and conversed with each other in the hotel lobbies. On several occasions, those who had drunk too heavily became involved in loud altercations.

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A [] participant also had sent Paulus a French newspaper with a warning against attending the meeting of the "Communist Field Marshal", and had supplemented this warning with the statement that the aims of the demonstration ran counter to the foreign political interests of the Kremlin. One of Paulus' intimates advised him to take the newspaper directly to the Soviet ambassador, G.M. Pushkin, and ask for a clarification of the matter, and, "this time not to get advice second-hand through Willi Steph". Later it was learned that Paulus lacked the courage to go directly to the Russian ambassador.

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When a friend of Paulus protested to him against the intrusion of SS officers into the movement led by Paulus, the latter refused to enter into an argument over the question.

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It was embarrassing to East Germans in the Hotel Johannisshof to see how large a number [] participants had obviously come only to enjoy the excellent food and drinks provided free of charge.

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9. Character and Purpose of the Meeting

The meeting of 25-26 June 1955 was very different in character from the first officers' meeting on 29-30 January. During the former meeting it

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was possible to conduct a true discussion; at the June meeting the entire program was predetermined down to the smallest detail. Not only Paulus' speech ("Soldiers of two-world wars summon the German people to unity and peace"), but also the four so-called "discussion speeches" (Diskussionsreferate), were prepared in detail in advance, and probably censored as well. All possibility of a valid interchange of ideas among the participants was excluded. General Brandt himself admitted that the present meeting had a different character from the former gathering: the January meeting was a sort of test meeting to sound opinion and determine the principal themes (Richtlinien), and the interim meeting with twenty Knight's Cross holders had a similar purpose. The present meeting, on the other hand, was intended as a demonstration (Kundgebung) for foreign consumption, since, in the matter of haute politique, "the time is five minutes before twelve."⁶

The speeches were to be printed and sent in quantities to all participants. By this means the East Berlin soldiers' Meeting was to be made the starting point for the formation of loose organizations in the cities [redacted] and also in East Germany. These organizational units are to discuss the points made in the various speeches. Thus the participants at the meeting are to become nuclei for the construction of a decentralized organization of the kind indicated. Mehring, who was seen to discuss with Paulus on several different occasions the drafting of the speeches for print, was asked to make the necessary corrections so that the speeches would provide a better point of departure for further discussions.

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Two NDP secretaries also assisted at the meeting by acting as cashiers for the payment of travel expenses, and handling various secretarial work. In contrast to the first officers' meeting in January, it was not the Peace Council which handled the support of the conference, but this time it was the National Democratic Party (NDP).

After the close of the meeting, Paulus, Mehring, Gaudigk, and Dr. Hummeltenberg remained together in conference. Paulus did not depart for Dresden until the second day later.

1. [redacted]
2. [redacted] Comment: To what extent the organizers of the conference were able to tap informal veterans' groups already existing [redacted] is not clear, but the fact that cohesive groups appeared [redacted] lends weight to the assumption that Mehring and Wagner had already organized units to which Paulus could now turn.
3. [redacted] Comment: Previously, the cost of the meeting had been estimated at 45,000 DM (West), to be provided by the East German Interior Ministry.
4. [redacted] Comment: According to Paulus, Hummeltenberg (who is Paulus' representative in Berlin) was intimately connected with the management of the whole meeting.
5. [redacted] Comment: Newspaper accounts gave Hummeltenberg the title of "Lieutenant".
6. [redacted] Comment: A representative of the East German Ministry of Interior stated that the purpose of the meeting was primarily to interest former Nazis in a united Germany.

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